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IDENTIFYING THE KEY TO FREEDOM May 9, 2006

REF: CRAVING.

Q: HOW DO WE FREE OUR MINDS FROM SUFFERING?

A: By coming to see how things actually are.

Dhamma Friends,

I have been contemplating for some time now what someone said once to me about a Feeling arising and about the question of how Formations come to be and how the Feeling and Craving links play a part in the Rebirth string (Dependent Origination) in relationship to a clear understanding of the real root of suffering and how we can free ourselves of suffering.

Ok. So you've got my interest.

It took a lot of consideration and meditation sessions including some walks with contemplation in the woods to decide how to try to communicate this to another person. I'd like to give it a try now. Sorry if it seems a bit long. Please be patient and I sincerely hope it helps anyone who reads it to come to a further understanding about the individual Feeling and Craving Links and HOW we can see clearly How all of this this actually works. by doing that we move into the TRUE NATURE OF THINGS.

LOOKING AT EXPERIENCE VS EXISTENCE:

The Buddha came to understand a lot on his way to enlightenment. One of the things he cleared up was how "Experience precedes Existence". Without our Experience, there is no Existence! This went against what many people thought at the time and even today most people believe that Existence comes first and then we are born and then we have the Experience. But this isn't so. Actually the Experience comes first and then, through volitional formations, comes Existence. This is all about volitional formations. If we are not here, if there are no sense doors, then there are no volitional formations arising. It took me about two years to truly grasp this. I was always saying it the other way around. But it's true. Experience comes first and then Existence because all of existence is there due to our own volitional formations. Existence cannot be without the sense doors cognizing it.

Indeed this is something to consider. It stretches the mind and opens it up new avenues for insight.

THE ROOT OF SUFFERING:

The Buddha confirmed that CRAVING is at the root of suffering. He proved that, by breaking this link within the Impersonal Process of Dependent Origination the cycle could be broken. Without Ignorance, when we understand completely what is real in each present moment, if we become the careful observer while in this balanced state, we no longer are the slaves to our emotions, reactions, assumptions, etc. Instead, we become free to experience each individual moment using volition as we "respond" instead of re-acting (becoming) again and again in the same old ways. [re-acting is like the 'replaying of the old recording' that some doctors will talk with you about in psychology or counseling]

Now, of course, for most of us, this is not a quick fix. Most often people(using volition) can't just release an arising pleasant or painful feeling and then expect to be free. They might get a glimpse of what it feels like to "not RE-ACT". But they can't truly and permanently wake up to how things actually are with a "bang" right now, NOT usually if you do it only one time. Why not? Well, because in many cases, one has been Ignorant or, in other words, ignoring the Four Noble Truths and just "re-acting" to whatever feeling arose in a very personal way, with this personality view, for say, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more years! One has been re-acting like this with most of the people around for an entire life; the parents, the teachers, the co-workers, and most people. Such a habit! Such a huge habitual tendency of how the mind has been trained to grab onto or push away and then RE-ACT and how one has been guided to believe all one's life that this is normal! One may think they are participating in what is real, but, if there is vast assumptions and conceptualizations being added onto what the moment is instead of just being in the moment, then they are very far away from the way things actually are!

This would mean, of course, that this practice, or re-training, would take some time to bring mind around into a more wholesome habitual pattern so it would stop re-acting. This retraining would involve some kind of an effort to stop us from moving so fast into Craving. We would have to be able to recognize/sense the liking or disliking of Craving as it was arising. We would have to be able to recognize the 'Clinging' too which comes very fast on top of the Craving. This Clinging becomes the preoccupation of one's mind about WHY liking or disliking arose. It's the story your mind gets caught up in. Craving and Clinging take our present moments of life away from us. We are accustomed to moving on into that link of further 'habitual tendencies' too which is conditioned by Clinging. This is the tendency we have to draw our stored reactions from which we've played out hundreds of times before when something similar to this feeling arose.

The problem is, HOW do we break this pattern? It is happening so very fast. One elder monk has described that this process is happening at a rate of many thousands of thought moments within the click of your fingers! Phew! How can we stop this torrential flood as it occurs? This was the question the Buddha solved.

First, we must be able to understand and actually see/Observe/watch the process clearly as it is happening. One can come to sense the link stages one is at during the meditation. HOW can we do this if it is happening at such a rate? To understand HOW the Buddha actually discovered the key link of Dependent Origination that could be broken, one must first look at what is actually happening to us as we meditate.

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON?

I have had people tell me that they have calmed down since they began meditating. They say they have slowed down the mind. But does one actually do this in the process of their meditation or is that an illusion?

Yes, we feel calmer. And, yes it does FEEL like our mind is going slower. But if you look closely, that isn't exactly true. We cannot slow down the mind. We do not control FEELING. A FEELING arises because conditions are right for it to arise. BUT, we CAN sharpen our awareness which is like speeding up the observation. HOW can sharpening our awareness help us, you say?

Well, I will give you two examples that might help you see part of why it holds the key. I am hoping that one of them will hit home for you.

1. The Automobile.

Have you ever driven along a highway and you are going 70MPH and other cars are going 50? As you pass a car that is going 50MPH, if you glance over into that car, you can't really see who is driving and what color their eyes are, or what they are wearing, or any real detail. BUT, if you are going 70MPH and the car next to you is traveling at 70 MPH too, you can actually glance inside the car and see clearly who is there! You can see if it's a man or woman, what they are wearing, even the color of his tie or what pin the woman is wearing on the lapel of her coat! You can see as much detail as you want if you continue to move at the same speed as the car next to you is going. It's amazing.

Well, with the meditation, one is actually not slowing down the mind as much as speeding up AWARENESS.

With a speeded up awareness, one can begin to examine the intricacies of the movements of mind.

The faster/SHARPER one's AWARENESS becomes, the closer the examination can be of HOW exactly the mind moves.

Many insights will come to the meditator as he observes.

How does the mind actually move away from the object of meditation to what is arising? How does this change occur?

What happens first? What happens next?

HOW does a feeling actually arise and pass away? What happens first, before that, before that, etc.

This is actually how we investigate. We are observing what a Feeling is; HOW does the feeling arise which is looking at the cause of the feeling; HOW does the cessation of the feeling occur; and what is the way leading to the cessation of the feeling. This is our path of investigation.

In this way the Buddha discovered the truth of each of the links of Dependent Origination and what was real in each part of the process. The Buddha discovered that the only link that could be broken by volition to stop the process and which did not take the application of "ANY" tension to do it, was by 'RELEASING' what had arisen at the link of CRAVING.

He discovered that you cannot stop feeling from arising without applying a great deal of tension and tightness. Take a look at anyone who is trying to suppress a feeling from arising! But it is not your feeling. You do not ask it to arise. Feeling is just a feeling. You cannot stop the functions of the sense-doors. The Buddha saw clearly that FEELING like CLINGING was not the key. One can see for themselves that CLINGING occurs following the condition of Craving. But Craving could be let go of. HOW? By Releasing, relinquishing, abandoning the habitual tendency of CRAVING.

Through training the mind into a new habitual tendency of RECOGNITION of the subtle arising of tensions; RELEASE or letting go of any arising feeling and not falling into the arising of personality or taking the feeling personally and not moving forward into attachment/greed or aversion/hatred towards it. Just let it go! Release it! Do it lightly. Not seriously. Just lightly release it. Again and again do this, being sure to RELAX "ALL", including "ANY very subtle underlying tensions" in the mental and bodily formations; then RE-SMILING to lighten mind and sharpen awareness and RETURNING to the object of meditation, be it the breath or Loving Kindness, repeat again the observation, RECOGNITION, RELEASE, RELAX, RESMILE, RETURN, REPEAT. Continue to smile through all of this and keeping this process very light. The smile helps you do this. Just a hint here. For real, the lighter you are with the practice, the more you will see and learn.

We are, of course talking about doing this exercise about 2-3 million times or more until the mind one day

begins to get it internalize it to the extent that automatically it will begin to do this on its own. Then we no longer have to apply volition as we are witnessing the birth of a new and wholesome habitual tendency! Also, as this tendency begins to take hold mind will become less and less busy and jumping all around. It will have calmed down considerably. At this time one can go into much deeper states of meditation and see the entire Impersonal Process of Dependent Origination occurring and discover much more about HOW everything works on the very deepest levels of this.

The point of the Automobile analogy is the clarity with which you can see into the other car while travelling at the same speed and how by sharpening of AWARENESS a meditator can develop incredible insight capabilities. This sharpened awareness allows them to see more intricately what is occurring as mind moves from object of meditation to arising feeling and back over to object of meditation continually. This awareness is used in our daily lives as we practice this technique using it to see the movements of mind's attention (the actual Impersonal Process of Dependent Origination) and letting go of Craving.

2. The Movie

The second Analogy that hits home for a lot of people is the Movie.

A movie looks like it is one moving picture. But, in fact, we all know that it is made up of many individual frames. If we could go into the editing room we could observe the individual frames and see exactly what the action consisted of frame by frame.

AS we observe mind's attention, it seems to us that it is moving very fast in one continuous flow. Now, even though we know intellectually about the links of Dependent Origination, we do not actually see or experience them clearly because everything is just flowing by. But if one is totally still and observing HOW a feeling arises, one comes to see that the feeling arising is not our feeling. The feeling is just a feeling arising due to contact and the conditions which were right for it to arise.

Example:

[Eye] meets [color and form] and [eye-consciousness] arises. The meeting of the three is [Eye-contact]. Because Eye-contact occurs, then Eye-Feeling arises.

This is true with all other sense doors too.

The meditation allows us to train our awareness to move as fast as the projector is moving the film along and thereby we get to actually see each frame of the film going by for ourselves. We begin to see what is actually real about the nature of the movie. Individual frames. In just the same way, we get to see the individual links during the arising and passing away of a phenomena which occurs during our meditation.

One thing that simultaneously develops here is that one gets to see clearly that we, as individuals, meaning I ME MY MINE, do "NOT" control, through any personal nature, what arises. We do, however, have volition (free will) when it comes to the response to any arisen feeling. We choose what happens next. It is in this realm our chance for Emancipation from suffering lies. We can free ourselves of the old habitual tendencies of our mind through retraining the mind to release whatever arises and then through our volition, we begin to move towards greater Equanimity/balance, building it stronger and stronger as we develop this new habit.

WHAT IS THE FREEDOM WE SEEK?

There seem to be many ideas going around these days about what the freedom is that we are seeking on this path. What is found in the suttas is that the freedom we seek is "freedom from CRAVING and the end of suffering; real happiness". Without CRAVING there will not be tension that comes with the "I like it" or "I don't like it" marking an arising feeling. Without the condition of tension, there cannot arise the symptom of Stress. Without STress, there will not be dis-ease.

Feeling will still arise, even for an Arahant, but it is not, in fact, the feelings which arose before that were at the root of suffering. It was the attachment ("I like it") or the aversion ("I don't like") of Craving the feeling that was, in fact, the cause of suffering. Craving was the weak link.

Having conquered IGNORANCE, which is not understanding Suffering, the Cause of the suffering, Cessation of suffering, and the Way leading to the cessation of suffering, one has acquired a new knowledge. With this knowledge, a person can, by choice, greatly reduce their suffering in life, by remembering through mindfulness to RELEASE the cause of suffering. They can do this to varying degrees even if they do not reach the level of an Arahant in this lifetime. For now they can clearly see what the suffering is; what the cause of suffering is; that, in fact, there is a state they can achieve where there is not suffering each time they release the tension and this is called cessation of suffering.

They now know how to follow a path through the practice of RECOGNIZING the tension, RELEASING, RELAXING mind and body, RE-SMILING to lighten the mind and raise the awareness of mind, RETURNING to the object of the meditation as a home base, and then REPEATING this process again. This takes them to reach the end of suffering.

If one works at developing this tendency, one's perspective will change to a more personal one and you will notice that one can decide, through one's own volition, that one is going to practice letting arising thoughts go and not holding onto them in any personal way any longer. One will cease trying to control them and stop becoming pre-occupied with them and in this way they will get free of many burdens, tensions, illness, bad sleep, bad temperament, sadness, depression, anger, hatred and, of course, delusion. Such an improvement for us and for the world's modus operandum!

Understanding clearly the matter of the Buddha's meditation by definition and coming to know what he was attempting to teach others to observe while sitting in the meditation is a monumental step in direction of freedom. Then as we go out into life we discover that "CONTINUING THIS OBSERVATION OF THE MOVEMENTS OF MIND'S ATTENTION WHILE GOING EVERYWHERE DOING EVERYTHING", is at the heart of the matter. This is the door to real happiness and peaceful living and relief from much of the tension of our lives. It is this that seems to be the doorway to a more Peaceful world for all of humankind as well if we can get the word out.

Much Metta,

KK

Sending you much loving-kindness

Remember to SMILE into it, no matter what it is!

:-) It's always your choice.

PS

As you can see, the 6 R's are popping up in there very consistently to find out the information you need to internalize! Have fun meditating.

<smiles> KK

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